

Railroads in the Nineteenth Century/Railroads in the Age of Regulation, 1900-1980

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good. The treatment of Bingham is wonderful, and stands on its own as a cultural document. It brings up many points, convinces on most of them, and raises issues that may call into question the interpretation of many artistic works of the nineteenth century.

Generally speaking, the book is a peculiar collection which any historian or architect or artist would enjoy reading, but might feel like unbinding into its component parts before doing so. The essays on Eckerman, Jensen, and Bingham are fine literary and historical productions. The series of essays on the warehouses in Gateway Cities are excellent narratives and evaluations. Only the essay on the Root buildings falls short of being a convincing contribution.

The author brings much new and valuable information to the attention of the reading public. His research provides the necessary groundwork for more detailed surveys and analyses of the industrial and commercial architecture of the Midwest and Great Plains. It is high time that this aspect of our past is examined and recorded, and that this area of the country receives the attention it deserves and the credit it warrants for excellence in construction techniques, use of materials, and designs for function. Professor Eaton has done a yeoman's task, which is not negated by the organizational problems or the unevenness of some of the treatments of architects, buildings, and clients. We have here the evidence of a good mind at work in a rich field, with rewarding results.

Railroads in the Nineteenth Century, edited by Robert L. Frey. Encyclopedia of American Business History and Biography. New York and Oxford: Facts on File, 1988. xxxiii, 439 pp. Illustrations, maps, index. \$75.00 cloth.

Railroads in the Age of Regulation, 1900-1980, edited by Keith L. Bryant, Jr. Encyclopedia of American Business History and Biography. New York and Oxford: Facts on File, 1988. xxix, 499 pp. Illustrations, maps, index. \$75.00 on cloth.

REVIEWED BY MERLE DAVIS, STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

These books comprise the two volumes devoted to the history of American railroads and railroad leaders in a new series published by Facts on File under the general title, *Encyclopedia of American Business History and Biography*. This series chronicles the impact of business and business leaders on life in the United States through biographies of business figures and brief histories of businesses. Each volume or group of volumes in the series covers a particular industry during a

defined period and is meant to stand alone. Entries within each volume are arranged alphabetically. Standard biographical entries range in length from 3,500 to 5,000 words, while entries for major figures run approximately 10,000 words. Entries for major personages stress the role of these individuals in shaping the national experience and show how their activities influenced the way Americans lived. All biographical entries place the business leaders in the social, political, and economic context of their times. Nonbiographical entries tend to be brief and provide basic information about the industry covered in the particular volume; they are designed to supplement and elucidate the biographies. In addition to histories of individual companies, there are histories of technical innovations, legal decisions, and relevant legislation. Short lists of appropriate references follow most entries. Each volume includes a historical introduction normally written by the editor of that particular volume to provide an overview of the industry treated. Individual entries generally are written by recognized authorities on the subjects covered. The goal of the series as a whole is to stimulate interest in business leaders and business enterprises. According to general editor William H. Becker, the series aspires "to provide a body of work that will help redress the imbalance in the writing of American history, the study of which too often slights business" (ix).

Taken together the two volumes under review provide a ready source of reliable factual information about railroad leaders and railroads in the United States from the early nineteenth century to roughly 1980. Browsers will find succinct biographical entries outlining key events in the business careers of major railroad leaders and many lesser known ones as well. Readers might well expect to find biographies of Cornelius Vanderbilt, James J. Hill, Collis P. Huntington, Leland Stanford, Jay Gould, and other late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century railroad financiers and builders, but they might be surprised and delighted to discover biographical entries on persons much less well known, especially on individuals involved in the management of railroads in the middle and later years of the twentieth century, when many railroads were in dire financial straits, when trackage was being abandoned, and when new, smaller systems were being formed from the wreckage of once proud and powerful railroad corporations. The same can be said about entries dealing with the various individual railroad companies. Readers will find concise histories of the Baltimore & Ohio, the New York Central, the Union Pacific, the Pennsylvania, and many other great railway systems. Persons thumbing through the volumes might also come across histories of the Western Maryland, the Bangor & Aroostook, the Bessemer &

Lake Erie, or any of a number of small regional carriers. The two volumes also contain separate entries sketching the history of the development of railroad locomotives, air brakes, automatic coupling devices, and a host of other technical innovations involved in the operation of railroads.

Persons interested in the history of Iowa and railroads in Iowa would do well to examine these two volumes. Entries trace the separate histories of each of the major rail lines that once crisscrossed Iowa and which did so much to make Iowa what it once was and now is. Even some of the lesser lines, such as the Minneapolis & St. Louis, are covered. Iowa readers might be especially interested in the entry by Leland L. Sage on Platt Smith, the early Dubuque railroad promoter, or the entry by Roger B. Natte on Lorenzo S. Coffin of Fort Dodge, who became an outspoken advocate in the long struggle for railroad safety legislation to protect railway employees. Other entries trace the careers of General Grenville M. Dodge of Council Bluffs and Governor Francis M. Drake of Centerville. Additional entries outline the business careers of Charles E. Perkins of Burlington and John Plumbe of Dubuque. Many other biographical entries that deal with native Iowans or persons with Iowa connections fill the two volumes.

Despite the many strengths of these two lengthy volumes, they are not without their shortcomings. Readers might wonder why there is no separate entry for John Insley Blair, the railroad financier and would-be "king of the West" who at one time owned much of the land in northwest Iowa. One might also question why the Transportation Act of 1920 (Esch-Cummins Act), which served as the cornerstone of the federal policy toward railroads for many years thereafter, was not given an entry of its own. Eugene Victor Debs was the only labor leader treated separately. The Burlington Northern was not given a separate entry, even though it was one of the nation's major railroad systems. Even more troubling is the acknowledged probusiness slant of the series as a whole. A reader might search at length before finding a railroad leader portrayed as something other than a far-sighted industrial statesman. Robber barons are hard to find in these volumes. These caveats aside, these two volumes are highly recommended and should long serve as a convenient source for oftentimes hard-to-find information about American railroads and railroad leaders.

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